

From: steve@wt6.usdoj.gov@inetgw
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/24/02 11:38pm
Subject: I protest the Microsoft Settlement.

I have followed the Microsoft anti-trust case and read the proposed settlement - and I have to say that I am deeply horrified. Why is the DOJ letting a proven illegal monopoly off the hook?

We have seen MS extend it's tentacles in subtle yet devastating ways. They claim that there is viable competition and yet have the power to sweep that away at a stroke at any time.

To pick just one of hundreds of events, consider the recent news that Microsoft purchased dozens of patent rights relating to 3D graphics from Silicon Graphics Inc. At first sight, this is no big deal - but those of us who try to use 3D graphics in a non-Microsoft Operating System can see this as a way to wipe out their competition at a stroke.

There is a pre-existing 3D graphics standard ('OpenGL') that was created by Silicon Graphics - and which is covered by many of the patents that Microsoft now own. Microsoft hate OpenGL because it's a portable, universal standard. Instead of embracing a universal standard, they methodically set out to create a deliberately (and unnecessarily) incompatible competitor. The support for OpenGL under Microsoft OS's has eroded steadily. Now they have the power to completely eradicate it - not just on their own platform - but on everyone else's too.

If that happens then Linux and MacOS will no longer have the ability to render 3D images. Period.

There will then be no possibility of computer games on any other OS.

No domestic computer users will even consider a platform that cannot run 3D games and Linux and MacOS will be sunk.

The OpenSource community could design a new 3D graphics interface from scratch - but persuading the hardware vendors such as nVidia and ATI to support it is truly an impossibility. nVidia in particular cannot afford to upset Microsoft because such a large fraction of their revenue is coming from another one of Microsoft's tentacles - the X-Box video game system.

This is but one example - I could list dozens of others.

The point is that if MS had a monopoly in just one narrow area, a small, dedicated group could try to compete against it - but when they spread tentacles into MANY areas, the synergy that this generates

for them can make it literally impossible to get competition started.

Splitting the company in two parts was a GOOD solution. I am disgusted that this is now off the table in favor of this watered down, ineffectual sell-out.

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